



Executive Summary of Project and Launch

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The California Council for the Humanities (CCH) has funded a project entitled "When We Were Young: The Experiences of Stocktonians Across Three Generations," A.K.A, STOCKTONSpeaks!, to be conducted under the auspices of the Harold S. Jacoby Center at University of Pacific. Headed by Project Director Robert Benedetti, the executive director of the Jacoby Center, with Gladys Ikeda and Cynthia Rollins as assistant directors, STOCKTONSpeaks! hopes to bridge cultural and generational gaps and build leaders within the ethnic community and its organizations.

Its genesis began in Summer 2002 when representatives of several Stockton organizations attended a briefing by the CCH at the Great Valley Center in Modesto. Building on the interest those discussions generated, the organizations eventually developed the current concept and successfully submitted it to the CCH for funding. Stockton was one of eight California communities to receive funding from the 140 that applied. STOCKTONSpeaks! is sponsored by the following organizations: Jacoby Center, the Haggin Museum, APSARA, Lao Family Community, and PACT (People and Congregations Together).

The Project utilizes collected “coming-of-age” stories to bring a voice to traditionally under-represented communities in addressing the challenges facing ethnic groups, the City and its citizens. The display of the stories, presentations to City officials and the broader community, integration into the school curricula, and other project activities will bring the stories of ethnic Stocktonians to be heard at multiple levels in the area. Presentation of the stories is anticipated in the following formats: group presentation/panel discussions, traveling displays, educational guides, Web site for information and as an archive, training material, school/library curriculum, newspaper articles and public access television spots.

The goal of this project is to collect experiences across multi-ethnic, three generational families: grandparents (elders), parents (adults), and young people (youth) and use these stories to open dialogue and strengthen the community. Narratives will be collected from the following nine ethnic groups: Native American, African American, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Filipino, Mexican American, Cambodian and Hmong. Clearly this does not exhaust the diversity of Stockton, but represents only a starting point in the collection of living, oral histories.

Wherever possible, the stories of individuals were collected by a team that crossed ethnic and age lines. Putting this diverse group together has made the very act of collecting stories a means of building new bridges between community members. All participants were asked what aspects of their stories should be preserved across generations, which aspects should not be relived by the younger generation, and what aspects should be shared with the community and its officials. Underlying the stories will be a record of how ethnic identities and cultural traditions are preserved and transmitted from one generation to the next.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Ethnic community organizations were solicited for nominations of three candidate, three-generation, families for inclusion in STOCKTONSpeaks!. Two families from each ethnic community were included in the final product; the third family was to be interviewed only if needed. The classic family profile is three generations whose coming-of-age stories may range from those whose youth was spent in their native country, to those whose youth was split between their native country, and those whose youth experiences are solely based in the United States. (In some ethnic communities, that profile may not be possible. Nevertheless, the experiences of each of the three generations are bound to vary from each other and will still be useful to describe.)

STOCKTONSpeaks! also obtaining nominations of three individuals from each ethnic group to be interviewers. To the extent possible, these nominations fell into the same generational classifications as the families—youth, adult, and elder. One of the interviewers was deemed “convenor,” and took on the coordination responsibilities; all three received stipends. Bilingual ability was not necessary, as translators were provided when necessary. However, STOCKTONSpeaks! sought interviewers who had leadership capabilities.

PROCESS

STOCKTONSpeaks! is an eighteen-month undertaking from its inception in midsummer 2002 to its target completion date in June 2005. Throughout the duration of the project, two assistant directors will be working with several advisory committees: Storytelling/Narrative, Evaluation, Presentation and Publicity. Each committee is chaired by a faculty member from the University of Pacific and a co-chair from the community. Members of each committee were drawn from educational, professional, and community organizations and have resources, expertise and experience in the subject sector.

The stories of 54 Stocktonians have been collected, turned into narratives by Pacific students, and will be edited and formatted for verbal and written presentations. Storytellers, drama students and key community leaders will be asked to perform/present the collected stories and lead conversations about coming-of-age within diverse cultures. These educational and entertaining presentation will be scheduled at different venues throughout Stockton beginning in late August 2004.

STOCKTONSpeaks! Launch at “Hands Across Stockton” Diversity Festival

Purpose: To launch STOCKTONSpeaks! in the community

Place: Weber Point Events Center, Stockton

Date: Saturday, August 21, 2004

Time: 12-7 pm

Presentations: 12-4 pm, stories and entertainment for each of the nine ethnic groups.

Sponsors: Harold S. Jacoby Center at University of the Pacific, California Council for the Humanities and City of Stockton